

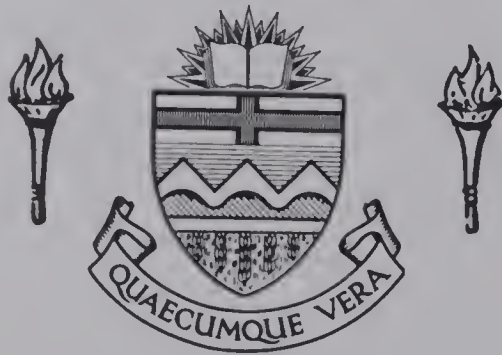
For Reference

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

For Reference

NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM

Ex LIBRIS
UNIVERSITATIS
ALBERTAEENSIS



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SAMUEL BECKETT'S THEATRE : AN
EXISTENTIAL APPROACH

BY

PREM SAIGAL



A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

APRIL, 1968

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Samuel Beckett's Theatre: An Existential Approach" submitted by Prem Saigal in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

In the two plays examined for the purposes of this study, Waiting for Godot and Endgame, Beckett explores at length extreme situations - extreme to the extent of bordering on the impossible. Estragon, Vladimir, Hamm and Clov are trapped. The situation offers no escape on the physical level and the struggle is to be continued, if at all, on the mental plane. Acutely aware of the situation and the limit it imposes on them, Beckett's main figures win out through a process of continuous readaptation. They transcend the impossible through an air of acceptance. They have interiorized pain, see it as part of their predicament and are no more than contemptuous spectators to the gradual disintegration of their bodies. They consciously obliterate the possibility that the situation could have been otherwise. They are scornful of hope and regret is foreign to them. In a larger context Beckett's characters become metaphors of courage that man alone is capable of.

The thesis draws heavily on Camus and justifications for various concepts developed here are to be found in Sartre and in Artaud.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
1	THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EXISTENTIAL APPROACH	1
2	ESTRAGON AND VLADIMIR	13
3	THE THEATRE OF CRUELTY	31
4	POZZO AND LUCKY	38
5	<u>ENDGAME</u> , A METAPHOR OF THE HUMAN CONDITION	49
6	THE MYTH OF TANTALUS AND <u>ACT WITHOUT WORDS</u>	77
	FOOTNOTES	82 - 88
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	89 - 93

- CHAPTER 1 -

THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EXISTENTIAL APPROACH TO BECKETT
IN TERMS OF SARTRE'S IDEA OF THE THEATRE OF SITUATION
AND CAMUS' LOGIC OF THE CONDEMNED MAN

I. THE THEATRE OF SITUATION

Reviewing the London production of Waiting For Godot Kenneth Tynan remarked that the play 'has no plot, no climax, no denouement; no beginning, no middle, and no end. Unavoidably, it has a situation....'¹ The remarks, though unsympathetic and slightly irrelevant, yet point to what has come to be regarded as an important aspect of the contemporary French theatre in general, and of Beckett's theatre in particular, the strong emphasis on human situation. Writing in 1946 on the aims and aspirations of the French theatre, Sartre remarked :

The young playwrights of France do not believe that men share a readymade 'human nature' which may alter under the impact of a given situation. They do not think that individuals can be seized with a passion or a mania which can be explained purely on the grounds of heredity, environment, and situations. What is universal, to their way of thinking, is not nature but the situations in which man finds himself; that is, not the sum total of his psychological traits but the limits which enclose him on all sides.... That is why we feel the urge to put on the stage certain situations which throw light on the main aspects of the condition of man and to

have the spectator participate in the free choice which man makes in these situations.²

Placed in Sartre's philosophical context the remarks would imply that man exists in a situation, and defines himself by bestowing meaning and significance on the situation, and by acting within it. When Sartre discusses the Self, he does not speak of it as possessing a 'character' but as that which is forever pursued but never attained. We are not what we were, and we are not what we will be. Thus to view human reality in terms of the behaviouristic limitations is to reject completely the meaning of freedom. Even when a man says that he is a coward, he is entering into a free engagement with his cowardice, and by the same token his words are a free interpretation of certain details in his past. It is through a conscious act of freedom that he chooses to identify himself with his past. As Sartre remarks :

Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself. That is the first principle of existentialism. And this is what people call its subjectivity, using the word as a reproach against us. But what do we mean to say by this, but that man is of greater dignity than a stone or a table? For, we mean to say that man primarily exists - that man is, before all else, something which propels itself towards a future and is aware that it is doing so. Man is, indeed, a project which possesses a subjective life, instead of being a kind of moss, or a fungus, or a cauliflower.³

The fact, the certainty of which is beyond doubt or reproach,

emerges that action is the essential attribute of human existence, and that in acting we act towards a future. A possible objection here could be that if man is free, he should be free to live in terms of his past, as indeed is the case with Dostoevsky's underground man. Speaking from an existential point of view I would grant such a possibility, but would also assert that such a person denies the basic structure of being and uses freedom to nihilate its very essence, that is if we agree that human reality can be revealed only through action. My past means that I am what I made of myself. It is for me a source of reflection, or experience; and it can be of relevance only if I act towards a future. To negate the existence of time in its futuristic aspects is to immobilize oneself in time, something that the inevitable fact of death does for us. In death we become identified with our past, we assume a character - but not until then.

It is in this sense that in Sartre's context there is no character; there is only a project of oneself. In acting the protagonist is choosing more than the action itself; a whole life is in question.

Having briefly stated what Sartre means by being in a situation, it should be possible to see the distinction when he postulates a theatre of situation as opposed to that of character. In his essay on theatre, Forgers of Myths, he remarks on the intentions of the French playwrights like himself, Anouilh, Camus

and Simone de Beauvoir :

A man who is free within the circle of his own situation, who chooses, whether he wishes to or not, for everyone else when he chooses for himself - that is the subject matter of our plays. As a successor to the theatre of characters we want to have a theatre of situation; our aim is to explore all the situations that are most common to human experience, those which occur at least once in the majority of lives.⁴

Eugene Ionesco, in the brief remarks on The Chairs, states with more precision the nature of the situations that Sartre has in mind :

In The Chairs I have tried to deal with the themes that obsess me; with emptiness, with frustration, with this world, at once more fleeting and crushing, with despair and death.⁵

The nature of Sartre's objections to the theatre of character can be best understood with reference to O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh. In the play we find a certain Rocky, a bartender, and two girls who are closely involved with him. The girls collect money for going to bed with strangers and give part of their profits to Rocky, who keeps a protective eye on them. They are reasonably happy, thanks to the scrupulous care with which each one avoids "calling things by their true names". Rocky, for all intents and purposes, is a bartender, and the girls are tarts, and not whores. As developments in the plot force the trio to recognize the true nature of their existence, the whole relationship collapses. The play is intended to demonstrate the

impossibility of their continuing to exist with this true picture of themselves, and it shows the trio rapidly retreating again into the relative content of mutually sustained self-deception. O'Neill, with his strong Freudian commitment, would not admit that a new choice of being would be even theoretically possible for them. Determined by their circumstance, Rocky and the two women are seen to be identified with their situations, without any hope of escape. This is in direct opposition to the theatre of situation as postulated by Sartre. An existentialist would argue that man, at any given moment of self-confrontation, is free to change his situation. The notion that we are what we make of ourselves is amply demonstrated by Sartre's play No Exit. Anthony Manser, writing on the play, remarks :

None of the characters can have genuine relations with others, because none can see himself clearly. And because they are not clear about their own identity, none can act authentically. They can only see themselves, and others, in a distracting mirror, and by this means have constructed their own hell. Hence, when the door of their room suddenly opens, they are all afraid to step outside, to face the possibilities of a real life of choice, which will involve the admission that their previous behaviour was wrong.⁶

Thus a similar situation is explored by Sartre and O'Neill but from different points of view. While Sartre asserts the value of freedom, O'Neill shows people as being trapped by their past actions.

II. THE CONDEMNED MAN

Emptiness, despair, and death are the major attributes of the situations that Beckett projects on the stage; and his major figures, Estragon, Vladimir, Hamm, Clov and Winnie, to cite a few, share the certainty of one fact alone: they are condemned. They are metaphors of the human condition in a situation that provides no hope. One situation merely leads to another, each imposing in turn its own limit, until man finds himself condemned to the impossible where all exits are barred. The isolation is complete, and the horror springs from the absolute certainty of what is going to happen. This precisely is the context in which Endgame is played out :

Hamm (anguished) :
 What's happening, what's happening?
 Clov :
 Something is taking its course.⁷

In the case of the condemned man the absurd is a continuous presence. 'It is the opposite of irrationality. What is and would be irrational is the fleeting hope',⁸ remarks Camus in his Notebooks. The condemned man strives not to escape his circumstance for that would be bad faith, a refusal to face up to an existing situation, but merely to comprehend the nature of his predicament. Reflection leads him to the contingency of Being in general and of himself in particular. It is the kind of realization that Roquentin arrives at

in Sartre's Nausea :

We were a heap of living creatures, irritated, embarrassed at ourselves, we hadn't the slightest reason to be there, none of us; each one, confused, vaguely alarmed, felt de trop in relation to the others. De trop : it was the only relationship I could establish between these trees, these gates, these stones. In vain I tried to count the chestnut trees, to locate them by their relationship to the Velleda, to compare their height with the height of the plane trees : each of them escaped the relationship in which I tried to enclose it, isolated itself and overflowed.... And I -- soft, weak, obscene, digesting, juggling with dismal thoughts -- I, too, was de trop.... Even my death would have been de trop. De trop, my corpse, my blood on these stones, between these planks, at the back of the smiling garden. And the decomposed flesh would have been de trop in the earth which would receive my bones, at last; cleaned, stripped, peeled, proper and clean as teeth, it would have been de trop: I was de trop for eternity.⁹

Or as Pozzo (suddenly furious) remarks in Waiting for Godot :

Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time? It's abominable. When! When! Oneday, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we'll die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.¹⁰

Condemned to be alone, Beckett's figures realize the contingency of all relationships. They see futility, the precarious nature of the happiness that they sought in their impossible dependence on

others. Placed in the extreme situation, they find that existence itself is contingent, gratuitous and unjustifiable. The suffering opens a window on the true nature of Being, and thinking takes the form of learning all over again to see, to focus their consciousness on the present which negates whatever reason they gave to Being. Yet absolute negation of reason would imply capitulation. Though physically trapped, they seek to transcend the situation through a conscious interiorizing of the pain that is inherent in their condition. In this conscious understanding of their predicament they act where all action would seem impossible. As Gabriel Marcel remarks in his analysis of the extreme situation in The Mystery of Being :

To recognize one's own nature at any level whatsoever is possible only for a being who is effectively acting, and to the degree to which he is effectively acting, though his activity may be exercised within extremely narrow limits and not be perceptible to the outside observer.¹¹

The exercise of choice, even though purely on the mental plane, enables the condemned man to participate in the situation. He learns successfully to ward off the state of stupor, of melodrama, that would leave him completely at the mercy of his tormentor. All his reason is directed towards avoiding pain while carrying on this encounter with the absurd, at times merely through a contemptuous understanding of his circumstance. 'There is no fate that cannot

be surmounted through scorn', remarks Camus in The Myth of Sisyphus.¹²

This is the logic of the condemned man, and of Sisyphus, in terms of Camus' interpretation of the myth. The gods condemn Sisyphus to rolling a rock to the top of a mountain, whence the stone would fall back of its own weight -- a torment of which he would never know the end. But Sisyphus knows. Having understood the object of his eternal damnation, and the nature of his punishment, he grasps the rules and plays, thus rising above his destiny through a contemptuous awareness of it. The gods stand condemned, humiliated and helpless. They have failed in their object if the object was to punish Sisyphus. They stand bewildered by the courage that Sisyphus brings to bear on his situation where hope has no further place. It is their move and they have none. They are beaten because Sisyphus has mastered their game. To him belong the reason and courage which Camus sees as marks of the absurd man. Through his reason Sisyphus realizes his limit and has the courage to act effectively within the situation. In a situation from which there is no escape, where time itself ceases to exist, he exercises the only choice of which he is the master : the choice of attitude. Confronted with the impossible, he asserts his dignity and learns to live without appeal. The wrath, the sadistic ingenuity of the gods founders on the awareness that Sisyphus possesses. Through his courage Sisyphus transforms a state of utter humiliation to that of victory :

If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious Sisyphus, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition. ... The lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory.¹³

In the silence of his cell the condemned man carries on a dialogue with his condition. Deprived of his former freedom he strives for an understanding that would enable him to act within the situation. The situation takes on the attributes of a disease that demands to be diagnosed before its cure can become possible or even before it can be stopped from further vitiating the body. The way to the diagnosis lies through an anguished despair wherein the condemned man must see the impossibility of his circumstance. Though no cure is possible, yet the disease is, as it were, localised. The condemned man learns to see it as part of his wretched condition, of himself, and inescapable thereby. This anguished realization hastens or makes easier the process of adaption to his new circumstance. He learns, in the very heart of suffering, to maintain a saving indifference which someone outside his situation is tempted to take for composure. His despair becomes creative and saves him from panic, impresses upon him its futility.

Even the prospect of total annihilation leaves him unmoved, and he approaches his encounter with death in terms of a game wherein he has been called upon to play a role. Through his

awareness he is able to abstract the anguish of being in this situation. As Pirandello remarks in The Rules of the Game :

You have to be alert and keep your emotions under control. Then you can immediately seize the event, understand it and play with it.¹⁴

Once the impending reality of death is accepted, the horror involved in physical extinction becomes secondary to the aesthetics of the game. The point is perhaps best explained with reference to Sophocles' Antigone.

The universe of Antigone is a closed one, and the situation with which the characters are confronted offers extremely marginal choice. Because of the curse on the house of Atreus man is pitched against the wrath of the gods and the frailty of human experience is emphasized at every step. Confronted with certain doom man can assert his dignity only through a full awareness of the situation, and by acting within it. He must cease to regret, and banish hope completely from the realm of his existence.

The play opens with Antigone. She has known the absolute in pain :

There's nothing grievous, nothing free from doom, not shameful, not dishonoured, I've not seen.¹⁵

But the courage she possesses enables her to come to terms with the humiliated condition of her being; the pain is no more a matter of

anguish, she sees it as inherent in her circumstance.

With absolute certainty she comprehends her part in the tragedy that is to unfold, tragedy that is inherent in the situation. Tradition demands that Polyneices be given the burial. For Antigone to act otherwise than she does would involve the compromise of her dignity, of her code of values. In the Sophoclean context she represents a naked will, a pure, free choice. Confronted with death Antigone fears not death but the lack of grace in the manner of her dying :

I shall suffer nothing as great as dying with
a lack of grace.¹⁶

The divinity within triumphs over the contingency of human experience, as is pointed out by the Chorus :

God's child and God she was.
We are born to death.
Yet even in death you will have your fame,
to have gone like a God to your fate in
living and dying alike.¹⁷

- CHAPTER 2 -

ESTRAGON AND VLADIMIR

I. ESTRAGON AND VLADIMIR AS METAPHORS OF TOTAL AWARENESS

In Waiting for Godot Beckett projects on the stage a closed situation, a situation in which choices confronting the participants are extremely marginal. The argument of the play is simple. It concerns a pair of tramps, Estragon and Vladimir, who have an appointment to keep. They are 'waiting for Mr. Godot to come or for the night to fall'. The appointed place itself is bare and gathers into itself all the attributes of uncertainty. It is a country road like any other in extreme desolation and different only in that it is there. There is also a ditch further along in which Estragon spent the night. And a tree :

What is it?
A willow?
Where are the leaves?
It must be dead.
No more weeping.
Or perhaps it is not the season.
.... more like a bush.
A shrub,¹
A bush.

But the argument is of no possible significance. They are there and that is enough. This much is obvious from the argument that the two figures indulge in on stage :

Vladimir: (looking round). You recognize the place?
 Estragon: I didn't say that.
 Vladimir: Well?
 Estragon: That makes no difference.²

What is also obvious is the gratuitous nature of the argument itself. They are in a situation in which waiting becomes the condition of human existence.

The play opens with Estragon engaged in a mime with his boot. 'His inability to get it off,' remarks Hugh Kenner, 'is the referent of his first words, "Nothing to be done," a sentence generally reserved for more portentous matters.'³ But Estragon's words gain in significance if we take them to be a reference to the impossible nature of the situation itself.

Vladimir, who commands a lesser degree of awareness, is only 'beginning to come round to that opinion'. In this bizzare situation, the impossibility of which has already been comprehended by them, nothing has relevance, except the courage that man can bring to bear on his predicament. The uncertainty that clouds the appointed place itself sinks in importance when it is realized that they have known nothing better. As Estragon remarks :

All my lousy life I have crawled about in the
 mud!....
 Look at this muck heap! I have never stirred
 from it....
 I have puked my puke of a life here.⁴

Their predicament has been to be there, which to them implies

waiting, waiting for a beginning, and for an end. Estragon and Vladimir are two existential heroes fully aware of their situation, and the limit it imposes on their will to act. The choice before them is extremely marginal. They can alleviate the pain of being there through hope and regret; they can even end the encounter with the absurd through suicide, but there is no doubt, as Camus remarks in The Myth of Sisyphus, that

the real effort is to stay there, rather, in so far as that is possible, and to examine closely the odd vegetation of those distant regions.

Like Sisyphus, like Antigone, Estragon and Vladimir are privileged in their understanding of the situation to which some chance or some conscious act, has condemned them. They are detached and objective with the minimum of limit that human subjectivity imposes on them. It is only in moments when human weakness triumphs over the cruel logic inherent in their condition, moments when the situation takes control of them, that they are at their weakest. These are the moments of breakdown, of man's capitulation in the face of his circumstances and such moments inflict on Vladimir the feeling of nausea. At such moments the lucidity that man has acquired through suffering, and through reflection on his condition, leaves him, and the situation gathers into itself the attributes of mystery. It is no longer comprehensible. To

Vladimir the state of nausea is both frightening and amusing :

Sometimes I feel it coming all the same. Then I go all queer. (He takes off his hat, peers inside it, shakes it, puts it on again.) How shall I say? Relieved and at the same time.... appalled. (With emphasis) APPALLED.⁶

Such moments of complete bewilderment are brief and very few, and the awareness of their absurdity is never far away. Vladimir completes his monologue echoing Estragon's opening remark of the play : 'Nothing to be done'. He has come 'round to that opinion'.

A situation develops into something mysterious and frightening mainly because of two reasons: either one is not fully aware of the situation itself, of the nature of one's circumstance and the role that the context demands, or one knows but has not the courage to act. Estragon and Vladimir, these heroes of the absurd, manifest total awareness of the situation and have the courage to act out what is the result of their reflection. They have accepted fully the anguish of being there, a context in which existence has been reduced to mere waiting, waiting that perpetuates itself from day to day. That the situation offers no escape is fully comprehended. In this wilderness one thing alone is certain :

What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come.... Or for night to fall. We have kept our appointment, and that's an end to that. We are not saints, but we have kept our appointment. How many

people can boast as much?⁷

Since the existence of Estragon and Vladimir can be defined only in terms of Godot, it is imperative that this cryptic entity be brought in, and a place (or meaning) assigned to Godot in the context of this discussion. When Alan Schneider, the director of the first American production of Waiting for Godot, asked Beckett who or what was meant by Godot, he received the answer, 'If I knew, I would have said so in the play.'⁸ Yet there is no lack of explanations as to the meaning that must be attributed to Godot. Robbe-Grillet in his discussion of the play points to the fallacy of a few of these:

Godot is misjudged in every way.... There is no lack of explanation....each more futile than the next :

Godot is God. Don't you see that the word is the diminutive of the root-word God which the author has borrowed from his mother tongue?.... And this Pozzo, who is precisely not Godot--is he not the man who keeps thought enslaved? Or else Godot is death: tomorrow we will hang ourselves, if it does not come all by itself. Godot is silence; we must speak while waiting for it: in order to have the right; ultimately, to keep still....⁹

It is probably wise not to be too literal in our interpretation of Godot. The play dramatizes man's anguish at the uncertainty of his situation as he waits for the arrival of something

that will give life meaning and bring to an end his suffering. Seen in this light the despair of Estragon and Vladimir acquires positive characteristics, and Godot, in the context of the play is a metaphor for the contingency of Being. Like Joseph K., Kafka's hero of the Trial, Estragon and Vladimir are serving their time, moving through the dark and perplexing corridors of human existence. Implicit in their long wait is the assertion of human existence as a value, and a total awareness of the situation. So long as they are there, the existence of Estragon and Vladimir is defined by their ability to wait, and by the attitude they bring to bear on their condition :

Estragon: He should be here.
 Vladimir: He didn't say for sure he'd come.
 Estragon: And if he doesn't come?
 Vladimir: We'll come back tomorrow.
 Estragon: And then the day after tomorrow.
 Vladimir: Possibly.
 Estragon: And so on.
 Vladimir: The point is --
 Estragon: Until he comes.¹⁰

Without a trace of melodrama, they are resigned to the inescapable nature of their situation. They accept pain, for pain is the inevitable attribute of their predicament :

Vladimir: And they didn't beat you?
 Estragon: Beat me? Certainly they beat me.
 Vladimir: The same lot as usual?
 Estragon: The same? I don't know.¹¹

II. TIME, DESPAIR, AND REJECTION OF FAITH AS ASPECTS OF THE SITUATION IN WAITING FOR GODOT

In an open situation Time is a measure of movement, of change, revealing to man the various possibilities that are implied in his future. But in the context of Waiting for Godot the situation is devoid of possibilities of action, and has come to be identified with waiting. In such a case Time becomes an instrument of torture, threatening the disintegration of reason. Estragon and Vladimir are bored to death, there is no denying it, but a still greater misfortune would be the loss of their reason. In order to participate, to carry on this encounter with the absurd, they must hold on to their consciousness even though madness would be a refuge. To stifle the pain of this tyranny that time imposes on them they enact a thousand variations on the same theme: the obscene superfluity, the contingency of Being. They are locked in a grim struggle to maintain their reason:

What's certain is that the hours are long,
under these conditions, and constrain us
to beguile them with proceedings which,
how shall I say, which may at first sight
seem reasonable until they become a habit.
You may say it is to prevent our reason
from foundering. No doubt. But has it
not long been straying in the night with-
out end of the abyssal depths? That's what
I sometimes wonder.¹²

This fear of insanity apart, Estragon and Vladimir comprehend

Time in its totality and as bearing a direct relation to their situation. Time that Beckett forces the audience to take into account is nothing less than man's own history. Placed in the context of history the play acquires a universal significance and involves the audience in an act of reflection on the condition of man. As Ruby Cohn remarks :

It is we who begin as the "betters" of Vladimir and Estragon, but our better actions and aspirations are aped and mocked by the waiters for Godot, until we see how frivolous they are.... In the tragicomedy....there is an equation of plot with human situations, and the major meaning of the play lies in that equation, rather than in digressions upon Godot.¹³

This connection with history enables us to approach the play in terms that reflect on the human condition rather than on a localized situation. The setting of the play is not any 'country road' but the backyard of human history, as Jan Kott remarks, referring to the theatre of Sartre, Camus and Beckett :

In modern tragedy, fate, gods, and nature have been replaced by history. History is the only framework of reference, the final authority to accept or reject the validity of human actions.¹⁴

In the context of history, Estragon and Vladimir are not forgetful of their past as Kenner seems to think when he remarks that

'none of them has any history, none bespeaks any past',¹⁵ and what appears on the surface to be defective memory is merely a conscious effort to lessen the pain that the past inflicts on them. Memories haunt them when the effort involved in a conscious act of obliteration proves too much, memories of man's brutality to man, of billions who have been wiped off the face of the earth. The realization breaks forth into an anguished expression of man's helplessness in the face of this germ of plague that is within us:

Estragon: The best thing would be to kill
me like the other.

Vladimir: What other? (Pause) What other?

Estragon: Like billions of others.¹⁶

Estragon does not localize the setting where murder was perpetrated for that would be impossible. The responsibility is universal, and judgment is available to man in the form of history. In the words of Franz, the hero of Sartre's The Condemned of Altona :

The century might have been a good one had
not man been watched from time immemorial
by the cruel enemy who had sworn to des-
troy him, that hairless, evil, flesh-eating
beast--man himself. One and one make one--
there's our mystery.¹⁷

Camus, in The Myth of Sisyphus, arrives at a similar conclusion :

We have preferred the power that apes great-
ness, first Alexander and then the Roman
conquerors whom the authors of our school-
books, through some incomparable vulgarity,
teach us to admire.¹⁸

The voices of the dead are in every backyard and make noises

Like wings.
Like leaves.
Like sand.^{18a}

'To be dead is not enough for them', remarks Vladimir,¹⁹ they must haunt the living.

In these insufferable circumstances their thoughts are for the "others". Even the images of Christ, of a poet, that Estragon attaches to himself fall short in describing the qualities of courage, nobility and the totality of awareness that belong to him. Exposed to pain and annihilation on the cross, Christ forsook all pretence to divinity and asserted his humanity, bringing out the contingency of Being even in a context of divine values. He not only despaired of God but questioned His very existence by challenging the mystery that is the major attribute of God :

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

He who was supposed to capture eternity in the moment of complete annihilation affirmed only the human when confronted with the futility of all illusions. The cry on the cross is an affirmation of the truth that no truth is worth the stake, that truth in order to be true must bear relevance to this life and not lead to its negation.

In the ultimate analysis Christ's despair was the result of his hope in the eternal and of his lack of awareness. Estragon

and Vladimir know and do not hope, and manifest, therefore, a greater degree of courage and awareness. They comprehend fully the nature of their being and have learned to live without appeal.

To Estragon and Vladimir the Bible is no more than a subject of playful mockery :

Vladimir: Did you ever read the Bible?

Estragon: The Bible.... (He reflects.) I must have taken a look at it.

Vladimir: Do you remember the Gospels?

Estragon: I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. There's where we'll go. There's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy.

Vladimir: You should have been a poet

Estragon: I was.²⁰

An air of uncertainty surrounds the circumstances bearing relevance to the Crucifixion itself. Estragon and Vladimir make frequent references to the story of the two thieves. "Of the four evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved", remarks Vladimir.²¹ Mr. Beckett himself remarked on the story in connection with the theme of Waiting for Godot :

There is a wonderful sentence in Augustine. I wish I could remember the Latin. It is even finer in Latin than in English. "Do not despair: One of the thieves was saved." "Do not presume: One of the thieves was damned."²²

If hope is presumptuous, despair is unChristian. Except in moments of extreme breakdown, Estragon and Vladimir recognize the futility of both. If there was a possibility of action they would act but being aware of the situation they bring to it the only attitude possible, they wait :

Pozzo: Behind this veil of gentleness and peace night is charging and will burst upon us (he snaps his fingers) pop! like that! just when we least expect it. That is how it is on this bitch of an earth.

Estragon: So long as one knows.

Vladimir: One can bide one's time.

Estragon: One knows what to expect.

Vladimir: No further need to worry.

Estragon: Simply wait.²³

The matters of faith, of revelations of man's spiritual history, reduced to mere theatrics, sink into nothingness in the context of Waiting for Godot. There is reason and beyond it is nothing. As Ruby Cohn remarks in her study of the play:

In Waiting for Godot, as in the other works [of Beckett], the biblical echoes are mocking echoes, probably because Christianity.... seemed to promise so much to man. Vladimir thinks of the thief who was saved, only after he declares man's foot is at fault. Of the Gospels, Estragon remembers only the map of the Holy Land, where the blue of the Dead Sea awakens his thirst.... The final promise of salvation if Godot comes is comically undercut by the dialogue about Estragon's fallen trousers.²⁴

III. REJECTION OF REPENTANCE AND SUICIDE AS MARKS OF COURAGE

I must be without remorse or regret
as I am without excuse.

--Sartre

If suffering adds to the absurdity of Being, repentance amounts to negation of the supreme human faculty of reason. It is no more than a form of self-deception through which one attempts to isolate what is an integral part of one's being : the past. We are what we made of ourselves. Through an awareness, a bold acceptance of it, we transcend the past but there is no escape. But can there be forgiveness for what has been done when we bear its mark till in death we are reduced to our past? As Mr. Beckett remarks in Proust :

There is no escape from yesterday because yesterday has deformed us, or been deformed by us.... Deformation has taken place. Yesterday is not a milestone that has been passed, but a daystone on the beaten track of the years, and irremediably part of us, within us, heavy and dangerous.²⁵

It is only in death that we escape our past for then we have lost all consciousness of it, as of all else.

Repentance, in the context of Waiting for Godot, never presents itself as a serious proposition to Estragon and Vladimir. They toy with the idea fully aware of its farcical implications :

Vladimir: Suppose we repented.
 Estragon: Repented what?
 Vladimir: Oh... (He reflects.) We wouldn't
 have to go into the details.
 Estragon: Our being born?²⁶

The reaction of the clowns to this little excursion of theirs into the domain of theology is only too appropriate: a hearty laugh. In their determination to face reality they refuse to take shelter behind myths that would tend to blur the sharp edge of their predicament which, under the circumstances, is to be there. Remarking on the anguish of being there, Mr. Beckett takes an attitude to the human condition not much different from that of his heroes:

Tragedy is not concerned with human justice.
 Tragedy is the statement of an expiation,
 but not the miserable expiation of a codified breach of a local arrangement, organised by the knaves for the fools. The tragic figure represents the expiation of original sin, of the original and eternal sin of him and all his 'soci malorum', the sin of having been born.²⁷

"There is nothing to be done" so far as the situation is concerned, but one asserts one's dignity by refusing to succumb to the temptation to avoid responsibility through repentance.

Apparently, Estragon and Vladimir had, at one time, the freedom to choose, and condemned themselves to this eternity of isolation, and took upon themselves this role that they act to the limit. There is, on their part, a firm realization that if they were to act they "should have thought of it when the world was young, in the nineties."²⁸

Having recognized the element of choice that landed them in this extreme situation, they yet act in repudiating absolute nihilism which would make suicide possible. They exercise their choice by preferring the suffering that the encounter with the absurd involves to the capitulation that is implied in suicide. Life for them is the ultimate value, and excludes all other value judgments. Tragedy is the tragedy of the human condition, of being there.

Estragon and Vladimir manifest supreme courage in accepting the tragic inevitability that is inherent in their condition. Death, which is so horrible, so obscene in a melodrama because its inevitability is never accepted, is no more than a subject for cheerful reflection to Vladimir :

It's too much for one man. (Pause. Cheerfully.)
On the other hand what's the good of losing heart
now, that's what I say. We should have thought
of it when the world was young, in the nineties...
Hand in hand from the top of the Eiffel Tower,
among the first. We were respectable in those
days. Now it's too late. They wouldn't even
let us up.²⁹

But the subject is of little interest. It is not worthy of serious or prolonged reflection; it is soon passed over and consciousness focussed on what is definitely of great concern to Estragon :

Vladimir: What are you doing?

Estragon: Taking off my boot. Did that ever
happen to you?

Vladimir: Boots must be taken off every day.
I am tired of telling you that.³⁰

Estragon and Vladimir display no fear of death, nor are they tempted by it. It is merely another aspect of being there. The universe of Waiting for Godot is absurd but they have transcended the absurdity through recognition and acceptance. The awareness of the situation enables them to approach it with complete detachment, as a game that must be played to the end. Their attempts at suicide are part of the game, means devised to pass time :

Vladimir: What do we do now?

Estragon: We wait.

Vladimir: Yes, but while we wait.

Estragon: What about hanging ourselves?³¹

The farcical nature of reference to suicide makes it impossible to regard suicide as a serious proposition open to Estragon and Vladimir as Esslin has done in his study of the play. 'There is', remarks Esslin,

one feature in the play that leads me to assume there is a better solution to the tramps' predicament, which they themselves both consider preferable to waiting for Godot - that is suicide.... Suicide remains their favourite solution, unattainable owing to their own incompetence and their lack of practical tools to achieve it.³²

The evidence in the play points to the opposite of what Esslin asserts. The tramps not only consciously reject suicide but also reduce it to the level of a farce. It is not that they have not

the courage to go through with it, it is just that they possess the greater courage that is needed in order to stay there. Suicide never is confrontation, it is escape of a cowardly kind. It is to the credit of Estragon and Vladimir that they are able to reject it with such ease. In so doing they exhibit the essential characteristic that Camus attributes to the absurd man, defiance. 'The absurd', remarks Camus,

is his extreme tension, which he maintains constantly by solitary effort, for he knows that in that consciousness and in that day-to-day revolt he gives proof of his only truth, which is defiance.³³

IV. CONCLUSION

This dusk, this strain, this waiting and these heroes of the absurd in total awareness - this is tragedy indeed. If despair finds a way into it it is despair of the most sanguine kind, despair that is creative in essence and leads man to understand his situation. There is nothing reasonable about their circumstance, but reason itself triumphs in that Estragon and Vladimir use reason to understand their predicament and not to challenge it. Inherent in their character is a sense of beauty, of ritual that prevents them from degrading their situation to the level of melodrama where man in the last minute seeks another minute and is filled with regret, remorse and anxiety. Estragon and Vladimir are calm and lucid.

This lucidity flows from their awareness of the role that the situation has assigned to them. And the play acquires the dimensions that Anouilh attributes to tragedy :

Nothing is in doubt and everyone's destiny is known. That makes for tranquility. There is a sort of fellow-feeling among characters in a tragedy: he who kills is as innocent as he who gets killed; it's all a matter of what part you are playing. Tragedy is restful; and the reason is that hope, that foul, deceitful thing, has no part in it. There isn't any hope. You are trapped. The whole sky has fallen on you, and all you can do about it is to shout....

I did not say groan, whimper, complain. That you cannot do.... In melodrama you argue and struggle in the hope of escape. That is vulgar; it's practical. But in tragedy, where there is no temptation to try to escape, argument is gratuitous: it's kingly.³⁴

- CHAPTER THREE -

THE THEATRE OF CRUELTY

I. THE THEATRICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE ENCOUNTER WITH POZZO AND LUCKY

The entry on the stage of Pozzo and Lucky impresses on the audience the complete alienation of Estragon and Vladimir. Having realized the futility of existence in the context of this Beckettian universe, they are withdrawn and completely detached, as has been shown in the previous section. They are outsiders in the sense that they comprehend fully the meaninglessness of being within.

The world of Pozzo and Lucky is a world of illusions where man, in order to grant his existence a semblance of meaning, becomes a victim of his self-imposed blindness, and creates in this void a sense of purpose. His life is geared to the twin instruments of torture: hope and despair, both being the result of a terrible lack of awareness of the situation, a stark refusal to face reality. He invites upon himself pain for he searches for happiness - a mirage in the context of Waiting for Godot.

Pozzo and Lucky are going somewhere, they have a sense of purpose. They are seeking their salvation. In contrast, Estragon and Vladimir are there, and examine coldly the stricken and humiliated condition of man.

The encounter with Pozzo and Lucky is not anticipated, but having been caught, Estragon and Vladimir convert the situation into a display, a welcome means of lessening the tyranny that time inflicts on them in their complete isolation :

We wait. We are bored. (He throws up his hand.)
 No, don't protest, we are bored to death, there's
 no denying it. Good. A diversion comes along
 and what do we do? We let it go to waste. Come,
 let's get to work.... In an instant all will
 vanish and we'll be alone again, in the midst of
 nothingness!¹

They are detached spectators and take their seats without any illusions about the grandeur of the farce about to be performed. Sentimental and cynical in turn, they act out to perfection the part of ironically detached spectators, thus emphasizing to the audience their ability to change with the situation. To Estragon and Vladimir, who are in an extremely marginal situation, where the choice is between carrots and turnips, between suicide and waiting, Pozzo's preoccupations with the trivial details of a very mundane existence are a source of endless amusement :

Vladimir: Charming evening we're having.
 Estragon: Unforgettable.
 Vladimir: And it's not over.
 Estragon: Apparently not.
 Vladimir: It's only the beginning.
 Estragon: It's awful.
 Vladimir: It's worse than being at the theatre.
 Estragon: The circus.
 Vladimir: The music-hall.
 Estragon: The circus.
 Pozzo: What can I have done with that briar?

Estragon: He's a scream. He's lost his dudeen.
 (Laughs noisily.)
 Vladimir: I'll be back.... Keep my seat.²

They are bored and amused in turn but are never involved. Throughout the presence of Pozzo and Lucky on the stage, they never forget their own predicament or their role in this encounter as spectators. On the departure of Pozzo and Lucky (in the first act) they realize the worth of this minor diversion and are faced again with the sadness of their own situation :

Vladimir: That passed the time.
 Estragon: It would have passed in any case.
 Vladimir: Yes, but not so rapidly.
 (Pause.)
 Estragon: What do we do now?
 Vladimir: I don't know.
 Estragon: Let's go.
 Vladimir: We can't.
 Estragon: Why not?
 Vladimir: We're waiting for Godot.
 Estragon: Ah!³

II. WAITING FOR GODOT AND THE THEATRE OF CRUELTY

Everything that acts is cruelty.
 It is upon this idea of extreme
 action, pushed beyond all limits,
 that theatre must be re-built.
 -Artaud

The encounter with Pozzo and Lucky, the little game within the game, has ended but it is important to understand it as a game.

Otherwise it is impossible to understand the disintegration that takes place in the characters of Estragon and Vladimir. They are cruel, they are greedy. There is no doubt about it, Estragon craves for the bones, they both beat Lucky. On the face of it their behaviour is incomprehensible. But understood as a game, their behaviour falls into a pattern and explains itself. Their cruelty, greed and the torture they inflict on Pozzo and Lucky, are all in the nature of the game they have chosen to play, in the role of the audience they have taken upon themselves to enact. The audience is involved in a ritual of cruelty that is an extension of its own values. Estragon and Vladimir hold out a mirror in which those sitting in the pit see their own image, the image of sagging humanity. If the reason for this spectacle of cruelty on the stage is beyond the audience, it is because man has never quite admitted to this horror being within him.

The Lord Chamberlain, the sole authority on what the public should see on the stage, recently banned Edward Bond's Saved for the play included a scene in which a baby is stoned to death in a London park. The horror of the scene, it was argued, is too much for the public eye; that these things continue to happen in private is really nobody's business. Sir Laurence Olivier's remarks on the play, and on the resulting controversy should be of some interest :

In this play of marvellously observed dialogue and first-rate dramatic form, Edward Bond places his act of violence in the first half, as is done in Macbeth, Julius Caesar etc. Unfortunately the extreme horror of this scene, though no more lurid than many an accustomed fact to which English railway toilets give testimony, has run away with most dramatic criticism and blinded it to the rare qualities shown in the rest of the play....Grown-ups of this country should have the courage to look at it.⁴

As Sir Laurence Olivier points out, the horror of such a scene is much more common off the stage than it is on it. The author has merely tried to involve the audience by focussing their attention on the sordid facts of human existence. But the theatre is still considered by many the sort of place where one goes for a bit of culture and not to see a baby being stoned to death or the three tramps beating to death the fourth.

Saved, though a remarkable play, yet suffers from the author's emotional involvement with Len, the major figure in the play, in particular, and through his fondness for the working class in general. The setting is localised and the distinction between the good and the not-so-good is carefully maintained throughout. There is room for the members of the audience to identify themselves with one character or other. Through this identification they are able to judge what is working class behaviour on a scale of middle class

values. The cruelty of the disputed scene itself suffers in that the audience is able to escape it through emotional involvement.

In Beckett's theatre there is no escape, either for the characters or for the audience. It is the kind of theatre envisaged by Antonin Artaud, cruel, clinical and detached, both in its conception and in its manner of presentation. Discussing Artaud's conception of the Theatre of Cruelty Germaine Bree remarks :

Artaud considered a dramatic performance as a mass experience in which the spectator was the essential participant upon whom the drama must act as violently as a surgical operation, tearing away the complacent mask of security and everyday somnolence. He envisaged a kind of theatre-in-the-round in the centre of which a magic, daemonic ceremony would be performed through music, dance, mime, cries and sometimes even words. The dark forces of sexuality, death, and life thus unleashed would then produce a kind of passionate purification of our subconscious drives.⁵

And as Artaud himself has pointed out, such a theatre turns upon

the preoccupations of the great mass of men, preoccupations much more pressing and disquieting than those of any individual.⁶

It is precisely with these much more pressing and disquieting preoccupations that Waiting for Godot deals. Man is confronted with

a set of his values. The cruelty that he sees dramatized on the stage is clearly his own. It is the kind of theatre that treats of the human condition, rather than a personalized form of anguish.

- CHAPTER FOUR -

POZZO AND LUCKY

The intoxication of tyranny leads directly to cruelty, for the libertine, in hurting the object that serves him, "tastes all the pleasures which a vigorous individual feels in making full use of his strength; he dominates, he is a tyrant."

- Simon de Beauvoir

In the previous chapter we dealt with Pozzo and Lucky only in relation to Estragon and Vladimir. In this section an attempt has been made to understand their behaviour in terms of their own set of values.

The universe of Waiting for Godot, of Estragon and Vladimir, is also the universe of Pozzo and Lucky. It is the universe enveloped in complete darkness, and man in this context can assert his dignity only through a total awareness of his predicament. If Estragon and Vladimir have abstracted the pain that is inherent in their situation, have accepted it as part of their wretched condition and have thus transcended it, Pozzo and Lucky, in direct contrast, have never quite grasped the nature of their being, and existence in their case takes the form of habit synchronized most carefully with the continuous motion of time.

Proud, condescending and complacent in his hollow sense of

achievement, Pozzo makes his entry like the withered caricature of a Tamburlaine, driving with full force the sunken image of humanity. Incapable of comprehending reality, he sees life in surfaces, and is aware of the contingency of Being only as it has worked in his favour. That he could have been in Lucky's "shoes and he in mine," is a matter for reflection, but the situation being otherwise, he has set out to exploit it to the best of his sadistic ingenuity. Pozzo is Mr. Beckett's metaphor for man immersed in and blinded by a quest for happiness that has its centre in self-aggrandizement, man devoid completely of feeling and concern for others. He sees the other as an object completely defined in relation to his own situation, to be cast off when it has served its purpose. Lucky carries his bags, Estragon and Vladimir contribute to the pride he takes in his privileged position, and to a perverse gratification he seeks in the pain of others.

The more people I meet the happier I become.
 From the meanest creature one departs
 wiser, richer, more conscious of one's
 blessings. Even you... (he looks at them
 ostentatiously in turn to make it clear they
 are both meant).... even you, who knows,
 will have added to my store.¹

In Pozzo one sees a man who has become completely identified with his quest and has divested himself of his humanity somewhere

on the way, a man who lives in terms of time rather than in terms of experience. Having preferred resemblances, he is oblivious to beauty that stems from participation on a deeper level. Stricken with a kind of amnesia he no longer recognizes Lucky as human. Communication with Estragon and Vladimir takes the form of clichés, words drained of their meaning. Pozzo's answer to Estragon's enquiry as to why Lucky does not put down his bags takes the form of an exercise in abstract reasoning :

Why he doesn't make himself comfortable? Let's try and get it clear. Has he not the right to? Certainly he has. It follows he doesn't want to. There's reasoning for you.²

The argument sinks to the level of words for their own sake. In this sense Pozzo comes close to being like the Smiths and the Martins of Ionesco's The Bald Soprano. As Ionesco remarks :

The Smiths and the Martins no longer know how to talk because they no longer know how to think, they no longer know how to think because they are no longer capable of being moved, they have no passions, they no longer know how to be...³

Not that Estragon and Vladimir do not indulge in these exercises in futility. But they do so with full awareness and as means of killing time in a universe where man is defined by his solitude, as means of relief from boredom that the situation inflicts on them. Image of faceless authority, Pozzo cannot

talk because he is no longer capable of thought. Without realizing it he is lost in the mechanical routine of his day-to-day existence. He has the sense of purpose, and this alone is his reason for existence. He is dehumanized to the extent that outside of this purpose even murder seems reasonable and a perfectly justifiable expedient:

But instead of driving him away as I might have done, I mean instead of simply kicking him out on his backside, in the goodness of my heart I am bringing him to the fair, where I hope to get a good price for him. The truth is you can't drive such creatures away. The best thing would be to kill them.

(Lucky weeps)....

Old dogs have more dignity.⁴

Lucky is no longer human, no longer a man "made in God's image", but a tool that has been blunted by age, and has outlived its usefulness in Pozzo's scheme of things. Pozzo will have no compassion in devising means of disposal. To him it is no more than an act of mercy to be carried out for the sake of his (Pozzo's) own convenience. Lucky's very sight is a source of extreme suffering to him :

I can't bear it ... any longer... the way he goes on... you've no idea... it's terrible... he must go... (he brandishes his arms.) ... I'm going mad... (He collapses, his head in his hands.)... I can't bear it... any longer...⁵

The Divinity that is within every man is subordinated in Pozzo to the devilish exercise of freedom that seeks its fulfillment in the

torture inflicted on others. Unaware or only dimly aware of the contingent nature of his being, he has deceived himself into believing that he carries in his hands his own destiny, and that of Lucky. He seeks to assert himself, his power, through a liberal use of the whip that chance has placed in his hands. And that is where Pozzo is beginning to be flouted, even at this stage of his quest. The tyrant tortures his victim in expectation of a reaction : cries of pain and appeals for mercy that will deepen his state of intoxication in the act of cruelty. But Lucky is dead to all intents and purposes, and flogging evokes from him the same reaction that it would from a dead horse. He denies Pozzo the sense of gratification that a tyrant seeks in humiliating his victim. Lucky presents the image of a slave who has found a haven in the collar and has banished completely the idea of freedom, of protest, from the realm of his existence. He refuses to act in a situation where action is possible, in fact demanded, and instead betrays a misplaced faith in Pozzo, faith that has led to the negation of his reason. Existence in him is reduced to the animal level, devoid of both action and reason - a matter of astonishment even for Pozzo :

Why he doesn't make himself comfortable? Let's try and get it clear. Has he not the right to? Certainly he has. It follows that he doesn't want to.... And why he doesn't want to? Gentlemen, the reason is this.... He wants to impress me, so that I'll keep him.... He imagines that when I see how well he carries I'll be tempted

to keep him on in that capacity.... In reality he carries like a pig. It's not his job.⁶

Even the concept of slavery loses meaning as far as Lucky is concerned. A slave, in addition to being conscious of his state as such, is also capable of postulating a situation that would afford him a greater degree of freedom, and it is inevitable that he should, one day, act towards this conceivable situation. Being totally unaware of his present situation, Lucky is incapable of postulating another. Life to him reveals its meaning in the form of a servile existence; and beyond it is nothing.

Thinking, an essential aspect of human existence in that it defines both the past and the future in relation to the present, in Lucky's case is no more than a mechanical performance put on for the entertainment of his master. More than that, if it reveals anything at all, it is the imbecile faith of a simple mind in the workings of a personal God :

Given the existence.... of a personal God....
outside time.... who from the heights of
divine apathia.... loves us dearly with some
exceptions for reasons unknown but time will
tell and suffers.... with those who for
reasons unknown are plunged in torment....⁷

After the first seconds or so of this speech there is a complete breakdown in the sense and the audience is confronted with no more than the spectacle of an unaware man cringing hopelessly,

incapable of reflection and thus beyond redemption. Practically inanimate, except to the commands of Pozzo, life with Lucky has ceased to be an experience. Completely identified with the chance that enslaved him to Pozzo, in his own lifetime he has become his destiny and is immune to any further changes. When the night charges upon him, worsens his physical condition, he is still lost in the comforting security of his collar. Having attributed absolute will to a personal God, man suffers the anguish of his being in a frightening silence, without understanding, without complaint. This blinding faith leads to a crippling surrender of reason, to a negation of all that life stands for. And man waits patiently for his turn to pass through the turnstile of death that will sink him into a divine oblivion, that is, if Being is an attribute of the divine.

But existence, in the Beckettian context, is neither divine nor rational. It is contingent, gratuitous and unjustifiable. It is absurd in the sense that there is no reason for it, no outside purpose to give it meaning. It is up to man to give it meaning and to transcend its absurd nature by recognizing its contingency, and by acting within the situation which alone defines his freedom of choice.

If Lucky negates his being through a total subordinating of it to the will of Pozzo, life for Pozzo, too, has its centre outside of itself. As already mentioned, he has identified himself

with his quest, has a sense of purpose, and is going somewhere. He has found justifications, reasons, for what is: existence. With the disappearance of these reasons, these justifications, existence is reduced to a sad caricature of its original self and Pozzo, in utter anguish, realizes the contingency of Being :

Have you not done tormenting me with your accursed time? It's abominable. When! When! One day, is that not enough for you, one day like any other day, one day he went dumb, one day I went blind, one day we'll go deaf, one day we were born, one day we'll die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (Calmer.) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more.⁸

Man divested of his illusions stands alone, as he was condemned to. Pozzo has comprehended the sad nature of this truth but has not the courage to accept it. The force of habit, which more often than not blinds us to reality, helps to maintain our illusions long after the freshness that surrounded an experience has died out and the experience is no more than a withered image of its original self, is still strong in Pozzo and prevents him from succumbing to death. The certainty that surrounded his former self has given way to doubt, and anguish has taken the place of sterile and simian complacency that was the distinguishing mark of his personality in the first act; but habit keeps him alive, and when we last see him he is still going somewhere :

Vladimir: Where do you go from here?

Pozzo: I don't concern myself with that....
I'm going.... We wait till we can
get up. Then we go on. On!

The fraud of meaningful existence that Pozzo played on himself is over and its farcical nature has pierced through the veil of illusions in which he shrouded himself. But his awareness of the situation is not yet complete. He lacks the ability to reflect on his predicament, and the spectacle of blind forces at work in the universe engenders only pain instead of lucid and calm acceptance of the contingent nature of Being. There is no philosophical transcending of the situation as in the case of Estragon and Vladimir. Pozzo fails to realize that anguished despair is inherent in man's initial misguided quest for happiness, a quest that postulates an end, and thereby negates the value that is implied in the means, in the move itself. In the absurd game of existence, one plays not for victory, but for the ritual, for the beauty involved in the making of a move.

In Pozzo, Beckett has drawn a character emblematic of the human condition in general. Such a man lives in a process. Time carries him until one day the sterile nature of his ideals becomes apparent to him and existence loses all meaning. As Camus remarks :

It happens that the stage sets collapse.
Rising, street-car, four hours in the

office or the factory, meal, street-car, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm - this path is easily followed most of the time. But once the "why" arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. "Begins" - this is important. Weariness comes in at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness. It awakens consciousness and provokes what follows. What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definite awakening. At the end of the awakening comes in time, the consequence : suicide or recovery.¹⁰

Pozzo, when we last see him, is in such a state of weariness, weariness that could lead either to recovery or to suicide. In order to assert his dignity to carry on this encounter with the absurd, he must either acquire the totality of awareness that belongs to Estragon and Vladimir, or collapse under the weight of his absurd situation. Staying there, being alive, demands courage and amounts to a defiance of the circumstance to which chance has condemned him; suicide implies a vain wish that things could have been otherwise than they actually are. In either case Pozzo is closer to the truth than he was ever before. Whether this recognition of the contingency of Being leads to a self-annihilation or to a proud position where he can agree with Estragon's opening remark "nothing to be done", Beckett leaves to the imagination. He is in that dangerous state where the present negates all the meaning that he ever gave to his being, and a new attitude to the present has yet to be formulated.

CHAPTER FIVE

ENDGAME, A METAPHOR OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

Hugh Kenner, in his discussion of Endgame, places the play not in any human, social, or philosophical context, but in that of a game of chess. And he is at pains to explain to the reader the various aspects of chess which are of direct relevance to the play :

Chess has several peculiarities which lend themselves to the metaphors of this jagged play. It is a game of leverage, in which the significance of a move may be out of all proportion to the local disturbance it effects.... It is a game of silences, in which new situations are appraised: hence Beckett's most frequent stage direction, 'Pause'. It is a game of steady attrition; by the time we reach the endgame the board is nearly bare, as bare as Hamm's world....¹

It is of some consequence to keep in mind that Endgame does echo the imagery of a game of chess but what Kenner fails to mention is that this is merely the framework within which the real substance is contained; and the substance involves human experience, human experience captured and dramatized at a slightly profounder level than that of a game of chess. The fact that the play might be about the 'end of the world' is mentioned only in passing. Endgame, remarks Kenner, "rotates before us for ninety unbroken minutes the surface of Nothing, always designedly faltering on the brink of utter insignificances."² There is no attempt on Kenner's part to place this 'Nothing' in the

context of the contemporary philosophical or social milieu, and for that reason we get less than a fair interpretation of the play. It is my intention in the following pages to examine the nature of human experience that governs the structure of the play, and establish its relevance to the human condition.

The comedy and the tedium that Time imposes characterize the universe of Waiting for Godot. The context in which Endgame unfolds is far grimmer, and totally without hope. The plot is built on cruelty, suffering, and death; and Beckett confronts the audience with a situation in which being has been divested of all vestiges of choice, unless it be a choice between staying there and dying. The curtain goes up on silence, a bare interior which is nothing but a geometric hollow in some enormous rock; and in this shelter are four bits of human flesh, Hamm, Clov, Nagg, and Nell, awaiting torture, and finally an end to it in the form of death.

The opening of the play unfolds in complete silence expressive of a sense of futility which surrounds the situation. 'In the production (of Endgame),' remarks Herbert Blau,

we decided to meet head-on the problem of Stasis in relation to Time: the opening mime, before the ritual unveiling of Hamm, took anywhere from twelve to fifteen minutes, without a word being spoken, with hardly a sound in fact. When Clov, after ten minutes, opened the curtains of the small windows with a sudden jerk, the scraping of the curtain rings on a brass rod was a major 'event'. That one action was prepared by improvi-

sations in which, at times, he took several minutes to pull the curtains apart. The single gesture was an expressive condensation of all the remembered effort. Since there was as much reason for not pulling as for pulling, by the logic of the play the action might have taken an eternity.³

In terms of the theatrical experience of the play, one truly waits an eternity before the silence is interrupted by what purports to be an attempt at human communication : Clov's brief, bitter, and demonic laugh.

The opening has all the aura of a ritual in which articles of faith are carefully revealed; the position of both earth and ocean is examined in relation to this cracked landscape of extinction by Clov. It is as if the table was being laid out for the final stages of a game of chess, 'old endgame lost of old',⁴ as Hamm, the protagonist calls it. The sense of order that Clov displays in the midst of this chaos stands out as a frightening contrast; it is as if man was confronting the extinct universe with his own freedom from guilt. Clov, through his realization of the monstrosity of forces that have brought the universe to this end, is able to detach himself, and his ritualistic starkness of attitude to the situation stems from this complete detachment. Outside the context of the play, but only slightly so, Clov confronts the audience with a withered image of mankind's own future if the present trends in our idea of progress continue, progress that permits murder, and that places its faith in nuclear weapons. The grotesque has become an attribute of human

existence. And on one level the whole play is a conjuring up of that situation where all would be silent. Expressing the absurd in our sense of values, Clov remarks :

I love order. It's my dream. A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust.⁵

Beckett is not alone in dramatizing the grotesque that confronts mankind. The questions of collective guilt, and collective responsibility, form the central themes of the writings of Sartre, Camus, Simone de Beauvoir and others writing since the second world war. Durrenmatt is expressing the sensibility of an age when he writes :

We are all collectively guilty, collectively bogged down in the sins of our fathers and of our forefathers. ...Our world has led to the grotesque and to the atom bomb and Jeronimo's madness is with us again, the apocalyptic vision has become the grotesquely real. But the grotesque is only a way of expressing in a tangible manner, of making us perceive physically the paradoxical, the face of a world without face; and just as in our thinking today we seem to be unable to do without the concept of the paradox, so also in art, and in our world which at times seems still to exist only because the atom bomb exists: out of fear of the bomb.⁶

The stench of the dead bodies left to rot, the horror of mutilated faces, man in the presence of a sterile silence that speaks

of a total extinction in the creative processes of nature, and man who is no more capable of telling his tale but has become the very image of destruction, such are some of the key aspects of the hell dramatized in Endgame. Through an art which commits itself to the human condition, Beckett brings to a reflective level the forces of mass destruction that are latent in our sense of values. His art takes the form of a pronouncement, not a prophecy; and the vision of decay is presented in the name of human existence. An Existentialist understanding of Beckett's theatre would strengthen the notion that he accepts the original contingency of being born in a world which is already complete, of being in a situation over which man has no functional control; but he rejects suicide, or murder, as means of escape. In a sense Beckett's theatre is a dramatization of the question posed by Camus in The Myth of Sisyphus :

There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy.⁷

The desire to escape is an expression of nihilistic tendencies in man, and amounts to confessing that life is not worth living. Beckett's theatre, as shown in Waiting for Godot, affirms the value that is implied in staying there, in being alive despite the forces that point to suicide. It is interesting to note that

almost all the major characters in his plays, Estragon, Vladimir, Clov, Hamm and Winnie, to name a few, have the means of suicide at their disposal, but reject it even though it would be in keeping with the situation to seek to escape. All this in the name of human existence, humiliated, tortured, and gratuitous though it may be! Extreme despair inherent in the situation only brings out the finest form of courage that man alone is capable of. In terms of Beckett's theatre, and of Camus' ethics, to seek death, one's own or the other's is to shed all claim to being human. In this sense Beckett's theatre is liberating, a theatre of confrontation that emphasizes life itself as a value, and explores extreme situations only to lay bare the divinity in man. Referring to his production of Endgame, Peter Brook remarked :

Endgame is made of human material, so unavoidably we have a relationship with it. If we accept this, it opens up a great wondering O in us. This emotion, strangely, fills us with life.

This is where Beckett is positive. This is where despair implies anti-despair, I mean that Beckett's wish to tell the truth is a positive wish, this wish is an emotion of incandescent power, this intense charge results in a moment of creation - the desperate charge created is witness of the ferocity of the wish, and thus is positively assertive and assertively positive. He does not say 'no' with relish: he forges his merciless 'no' out of a longing to be able to say 'yes'.⁸

To say that Beckett's theatre is static, that situations are

not developed, as has been implied by Hugh Kenner and Kenneth Tynan,⁹ is to betray a gross ignorance of the predicament facing us, and of what the author might be talking about.

I BEING AND NOTHINGNESS

The audience has waited in darkness. The curtain has gone up on a grotesque silence and no words have yet punctured it. It is approximately fifteen minutes before Clov with a 'stiff staggering walk,' turns towards the auditorium and fulfills the time old tradition of a theatre with words : 'It's finished,' - the last words of Christ on the Cross, according to the Gospel of St. John. His opening remarks are a monologue, a reflection on the anguish of being in the context of an otherwise extinct universe. The words recapture a spirit of endurance that makes the surrounding silence appear a mere lull before the breaking of a storm :

Clov (fixed gaze, tonelessly):
 Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it
 must be nearly finished.
 (Pause.)
 Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day,
 suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the
 impossible heap.
 (Pause.)
 I can't be punished any more.¹⁰

Like the chorus in Greek tragedy Clov's remarks lay bare the situation; the extent of suffering that is gradually subduing the

spirit of endurance in man. The gods have broken the rules of the game, and being has been divested of all choice, of future. The predicament of man is to be there, helplessly waiting for it to finish. Man, in this context, is no more than a thing, faced with the inevitability of decay.

This...this...thing.¹¹

Man is revealed as caged, the surrounding darkness gradually draining his will to survive, and his despair is no longer functional in the sense that there is no possibility of change in the situation. As Coe remarks in his discussion of the play :

The terrifying power of the play...springs from the fact that Beckett himself seems to lose sight of 'despair' as a functional element in an existentialist dialectic. It is as though he himself must first actually experience this despair, and drain the very dregs of his own impotence and purposeless futility, before he can proceed further.¹²

In the course of his ritual Clov has already revealed Hamm - mutilated, crippled, and rendered hopelessly immobile in his cell, outside of which is death. Over his face is a handkerchief, a large ordinary handkerchief, but 'bloodstained'. The face that this covering reveals later on is also 'very red'. This is the face of a man who must play the game of endurance to the end - the game that he is predestined to lose, 'old endgame lost of old'. It is the same

endgame that has been played through history by Oedipus, Lear, and Hamlet, suggests Blau in his remarks on the magnitude of the play :

We are in Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, at the dark root of the scream, unbearably humane. What is amazing about the play is its magnitude. Haunting the limits of endurance, it finds grandeur amid the trash, trivia, and excrement of living. More than any other modern drama I know it creates explicitly that place where Yeats said Love has pitched its mansion. And it does this by converting an enormous sense of loss into a retrospective vision, reaching back through the failure of a culture to its most splendid figures: Hamlet, Lear, Oedipus at Colonus, the enslaved Samson, eyeless at Gaza.¹³

The parallels with Oedipus Rex and Oedipus at Colonus are particularly striking. Oedipus, a mere pawn on the divine chess board, set out to cheat destiny but lost. The gods had foreknown, and foretold to him the bitter climax of a futile struggle. 'I was', remarks Oedipus,

fated to lie with my mother, and show to daylight an accursed breed which men would not endure, and I was doomed to be murderer of the father that begot me.¹⁴

Oedipus questioned the will of the gods and brought upon himself their fury. Each move, each moment, brought him closer to his bitter fate, and to a life-long death-in-life; Hamm echoes the anguish of 'that old Greek' in his reflections :

Moment upon moment, pattering down, like the
millet grains of...
(he hesitates)
...that old Greek, and all life long you wait
for that to mount up to life.¹⁵

The manner of Oedipus' dying, the precise moment of his death, of
salvation, were themselves pre-destined :

My children, the appointed end has come; I
can no longer turn away from it.¹⁶

Oedipus in the hands of destiny becomes an image of a man divested
of all choice and the chorus makes a fitting pronouncement on his
tragedy, on any tragedy.

Whatever God has brought about
Is to be borne with courage.
You must not feed the flames of grief.¹⁷

Hamm, like Oedipus, is the victim of circumstances to which
fate has consigned him. The situation is tragic, inescapable, and
therefore grotesque. Hamm, in his attitude to the inescapable
nature of the situation emphasizes the farcical by consciously
accepting his predicament and by playing the fool, which under the
circumstances amounts to playing the king. As Jan Kott remarks in
his discussion of the play :

The grotesque exists in a tragic world. Both the
tragic and the grotesque visions of the world are
composed, as it were, of the same elements. In a

tragic and grotesque world, situations are imposed, compulsory and inescapable. Freedom of choice and decision are part of this compulsory situation, in which both the tragic hero and the grotesque actor must always lose their struggle against the absolute. The downfall of the tragic hero is a confirmation and recognition of the absolute; whereas the downfall of the grotesque actor means mockery of the absolute and its desecration.¹⁸

Jan Kott's remarks are of particular relevance to the understanding of the play. Instead of reverence or regret Hamm brings to the situation a mocking acceptance. A clown would not be there, but being there he accepts the inevitability of his circumstance and sets out to play the game, even though the end is foreknown. Assured of his defeat he asserts his mastery over the situation by abstracting the role he is condemned to play. He is in a situation, is limited by it, but wins out by refusing to submit to it. There is in his opening remarks a lucid understanding of the past and of the present as an avenue leading into the future, if any :

Me
 (he yawns)
 --to play....
 Can there be misery--
 (he yawns)
 --loftier than mine, no doubt. Formerly. But
 now?
 (Pause.)
 My father?
 (Pause.)
 My mother?
 (Pause.)
 My ...dog?
 (Pause.)

Oh I am willing to believe they suffer as much
as such creatures can suffer. But does that
mean their sufferings equal mine? No doubt.

(Pause.)

No, all is a--

(he yawns)

--absolute,

(proudly)

the bigger a man is the fuller he is.

(Pause. Gloomily¹⁹)

And the emptier.

The situation is impossible, that of a man condemned to oblivion. The suffering is absolute. There is no doubt about it. Yet Hamm is no Hamlet. In his tone there is a stir of mockery, a defiance that makes light of the situation, reduces it to the level of the farce that it is. He goes through the regular motions of suffering but only as moves in a game that he is condemned to play. Denmark is beyond redemption and "it's time it ended, in the shelter too." He arouses admiration and stimulates reflection in the audience but is beyond such luxuries himself. Even the nostalgia for a semblance of unity in the past, for those dreams of the future, those forests, is slight and mocking. What is of prime importance in his own courage in the present state of near-extinction, an ability to play the game to an end, without hope, without regret. The situation has been transformed into a madman's nightmare and man is to learn to live without appeal. This courage is his sole companion. The encounter with the absurd, though farcical and without meaning, has to be maintained at all costs :

Clov: Why this farce, day after day?
 Hamm: Routine: One never knows.²⁰

The courage that Hamm possesses is absurd. It offers no escape but saves him from utter humiliation and enables him to exercise choice even in the suffocation of this closed cell. Instead of resignation, a state of stupor, there is a lucid indifference to the humiliated condition of man, indifference that stems from his awareness of the circumstances. Hamm's courage in the context of Endgame is a form of action that takes into account the limits imposed by the situation.

II. TIME AND IMMOBILITY

In Waiting for Godot and in Endgame the audience and the characters alike are aware of Time only as an instrument of torture; and Mr. Beckett's theatre is static, on a very superficial level, in the sense that it lacks movement, the kind of movement that is possible only within Time. Human existence in an ordinary situation acquires meaning in relation to its future, in terms of what is possible but may not be, and man is conscious of his freedom to act towards what he deems to be realizable. The present to him means being present to a set of possibilities, to a future, even uncertain though it may be. Hamm and Clov, however, are in no ordinary situation and the universe of Endgame is a universe without future. Man

instead of being present to a set of realizable possibilities, finds himself condemned to a certain doom. In anguish he realizes his helplessness, his complete inability to act towards a change in his circumstances. Being is divested of all illusions and man is aware of his existence only through his body which is completely exposed to the destructive processes of nature. It is in his body alone that he is aware of change which is one permanent attribute of his frail existence :

Hamm: Nature has forgotten us.
 Clov: There's no more nature.
 Hamm: No more nature! You exaggerate.
 Clov: In the vicinity.
 Hamm: But we breathe, we change! We lose
 our hair, our teeth! Our bloom!
 Our ideals!
 Clov: Then she hasn't forgotten us.²¹

To be conscious in this context is to be conscious of the gradual decay in the body and a constant tension in the mind. Man can be happy, only in a state of oblivion induced through pain-killers, or through sleep!

Quiet, quiet, you're keeping me awake...If
 I could sleep I might make love. I'd go
 into the woods. My eyes would see...the
 sky, the earth. I'd run, run, they wouldn't
 catch me.²²

These splendours that Hamm's crippled imagination would evoke, if possible, all belong to the past and have been sucked into the

present state of near-extinction. For the earth, for nature to be revived, for Hamm to have a future, "It'd need to rain". But in Clov's mind there is the cruel certainty that "It won't rain". In vain and in anguish Hamm ponders over his predicament :

There's something dripping in my head.
A heart, a heart in my head.²³

The mind listens, gets outside of itself and seeks to remedy the situation. But the only remedy is in the realization that there is no remedy. Hamm and Clov are taking their course, they are in a cell and

Beyond is the...other hell.²⁴

Time, which is a measure of man's freedom to act, has lost all distinction for there is no conceivable escape from the present. Existence is reduced to a "thing" in this landscape of extinction. The past is long past, separated from the present by "that bloody awful day" when an awful silence descended over the whole earth, alienated man from his human surroundings, rendered him helpless, and identified him with his past :

Hamm: Go on and get the oilcan.
Clov: What for?
Hamm: To oil the castors.
Clov: I oiled them yesterday.
Hamm: Yesterday! What does that mean?
Yesterday!

Clov: (violently)
 That means that bloody awful day, long
 ago, before this bloody awful day.²⁵

In the infinite emptiness of Endgame Hamm and Clov feel the presence of Time but are incapable of defining it either through experience or through action. Time has lost all relevance, has been reduced to "zero". It is one vast span till the dying man finally dies. Nothing ever happens. "It's a day like any other day," and "all life long the same inanities."²⁶

III. INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE GUILT : THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HAMM AND CLOV

If the universe of Endgame is a universe without future (as has been shown in the last section) then the bond that exists between Hamm and Clov can hardly be termed a relationship that has freedom as its basis. It is a bond necessitated by the extremely marginal nature of the situation that has thoroughly undermined man's freedom to move outside of the cell to which circumstances have condemned him. Hamm and Clov are both there, together through the force of circumstances, but essentially alone, forsaken and condemned to the certainty of death. Ritualistically precise, their relationship is distilled of all irrelevancies and is without emotional involvement. Together they must take their course, endure the suffering until one or both are finally overtaken by

death. Freedom to them has come to mean a conscious acceptance of necessity :

Hamm: Why do you stay with me?

Clov: Why do you keep me?

Hamm: There's no one else.²⁷

Clov: There's nowhere else.

It is a strange, weird relationship but absolutely in keeping with the atmosphere of death in which Endgame is steeped. Man is up against a vision of futility in which the meaninglessness of human existence is emphasized at every step. It is a game in which every move brings out the farcical; but man cannot quit, cannot commit suicide, for that is capitulation. He must enact the role from which there is no escape but which he accepts because there is no escape. Clov is ever on the verge of leaving, but just before the curtain goes down on what has been an extremely excruciating experience, the audience still finds him standing by the door, 'impassive and motionless, his eyes fixed on Hamm.' This is how he appeared at the very opening of the play. Nothing has happened except, of course, that Nell has died in the meantime, has achieved what could reasonably be called salvation in this context.

In Waiting for Godot Estragon and Vladimir, despite the hopelessness of their situation, made a genuine attempt at communication and there was in their relationship a tenderness that held them together. But in Endgame because it is absolute necessity that holds them together, any communication between the characters takes the

form of a savage confrontation in which the emotional outbursts are choked; and what emerges on the surface is a frightening calmness. Clov can leave Hamm but does not, just as Hamm can dispose of Clov but prefers to maintain the status quo out of necessity. They threaten each other but the threats have little or no meaning :

Hamm: I'll give you nothing more to eat.

Clov: Then we'll die.

Hamm: I'll give you just enough to keep
you from dying. You'll be hungry
all the time.

Clov: Then we won't die.²⁸

The impossibility of the situation brings about in them this starkness of attitude. Having been deprived of a future, Hamm and Clov can see no end to their dependence on each other; and the suffering that they go through is seen as inherent in the cruel nature of their circumstances, in the nature of this game that they are playing against some supreme mechanism at work in the universe. That Hamm should have caused him suffering is a matter of complete indifference to Clov :

Hamm: I've made you suffer too much.

(Pause.)

Haven't I?

Clov: It's not that.

Hamm: (shocked)

I haven't made you suffer too much?

Clov: Yes!

Hamm: (relieved) Ah you gave me a fright!²⁹

The relationship between Hamm and Clov, as they see it, is merely another meaningless ritual, maintained with a contemptuous faithfulness to the extent that both pride themselves in its perfection. The farce has gone on so long that they have "got into the way of it". There is no longer any question of participation. One simply endures the physical presence of the other for there is no escape from it. The very thought of a meaningful relationship in an absurd situation evokes a sardonic response in both Hamm and Clov :

Hamm: We're not beginning to...to...mean something?

Clov: Mean something? You and I, mean something!

(brief laugh.)

Ah that's a good one!³⁰

Mind has reached the end of its tether, it is no longer groping for answers and there is, on the part of Hamm and Clov, an instinctive realization of the finality of their situation. Communication between them is divorced of all thought, a mere fulfillment of the primitive urge in man that attempts to break the surrounding silence. Even the most hardened of criminals has not the courage to stand up to the rigours of a solitary confinement.

Clov: I'll leave you.

Hamm: No!

Clov: What is there to keep me here?

Hamm: The dialogue.³¹

The dialogue offers a temptation, is a major weakness but Hamm and Clov, being human, succumb to it. The truly contemptuous answer to the surrounding silence would be to stay silent.

Hamm and Clov are two sad clowns, helplessly disintegrating in the anguished awareness of their predicament. Existence in this context is devoid of all purpose and there is certainty only of death. There are no more surprises, nothing tangible ever happens and they are beyond the realm of possibilities. It is

like the funny story we have heard too often, we still find it funny, but we don't laugh any more.³²

In their relationship, which amounts to no more than being in the same situation, Hamm and Clov play their destined roles, enact their mimes, at times involving the use of words. They are familiar with their respective rituals to the last detail. As Hamm remarks :

Do you remember, in the beginning, when you took me for a turn? You used to hold the chair too high. At every step you nearly tipped me out.

(With senile quaver.)

Ah great fun, we had, the two of us, great fun.

(Gloomily.)

And then we got into the way of it.³³

That the relationship should be strongly tinged with cruelty

is only natural in the circumstances. After all even in a most friendly game we do not make concessions to the opponent. Hamm is cruel in a manner of speaking but Clov holds more cards. True that Hamm showers all his affections on a toy dog but it is also true that Clov betrays none.

Hamm: Kiss me.
 (Pause.)
 Will you not kiss me?
 Clov: No.
 Hamm: On the forehead.
 Clov: I won't kiss you anywhere.
 (Pause.)
 Hamm: (Holding out his hand) :
 Give me your hand at least.
 (Pause.)
 Will you not give me your hand?
 Clov: I won't touch you.
 (Pause.)³⁴

If one were to talk in terms of human emotions this is perhaps the most poignant moment on the stage of Endgame. Man is denied the minutest vestiges of participation in human relationships, and his utter solitude, to which he refuses to yield, is emphasized at every step. The effect of the cruelty of circumstances is greater on Hamm for he is the king :

the bigger a man is the fuller he is.
 (Pause. Gloomily.)
 And the emptier.

Hamm's anguish is understandable but in order to assert his courage, to rise above his predicament, he will have to discard

all means of support and stay there alone, without dialogue, without expectation. At this stage of his suffering he still suffers from the hallucinations of escape, as though he had not quite accustomed himself to his situation :

Let's go from here, the two of us! South!
 You can make a raft and the currents will
 carry us away, far away, to other...
 mammals!³⁶

So far we have dealt with cruelty as it is seen to be inherent in the situation and not so much in character. The normal human possibilities disappear with the disappearance of the future, and consequently moral judgments on a personal level hardly make sense. But there is also another kind of cruelty that the audience is confronted with in Endgame : the sense of guilt that results from the realization that man is responsible on a collective level for what has taken place in history. It is in the framework of the extinct humanity that Hamm suffers, and holds himself responsible. There is on his part a conscious realization of the universal nature of the guilt, and of what man could have done to save himself :

You weep, and weep, for nothing, so as not to
 laugh, and little by little...you begin to
 grieve.
 All those I might have helped.
 (Pause.)
 Helped!
 (Pause.)
 Saved.
 (Pause.)
 Saved!
 (Pause.)³⁷

As the conscience of the audience Hamm becomes the image of man's inhumanity to man. If the universe is no longer thought of as controlled by the divine forces, as Beckett would seem to imply, man alone must bear the responsibility for acts of murder, and for acts that have reduced the universe to the point of near-extinction. Through a detached dramatization of the forces of cruelty latent in the universe Beckett makes the audience go through an experience of despair that results from having been caught in an extreme situation. This despair, though futile in the case of Hamm and Clov, brings to the audience an awareness of man's predicament in an absurd universe. Man, in order to give meaning to human existence, must act in a way that would justify his freedom in relation to the rest of mankind. As Sartre remarks :

The first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. And when we say that man is responsible for himself, we do not mean that he is responsible for his own individuality, but that he is responsible for all men...when we say that man chooses himself, we do mean that every one of us must choose himself; but that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men.³⁸

In Endgame Beckett has confronted the audience with the spectacle of man's own history, his eventual condemnation to the "shelter" if history continues to take its present course. The

purpose of such art is to stimulate reflection on the absurdity of our values, on the destructiveness of such values in a universal context. Endgame succeeds brilliantly.

IV. THE DEATH OF GOD

In the context of Endgame man is confronted with the irrationality of his values, and the believer with the death of God.

Faith in God in the situation amounts to no more than an illusion, a negation of what is left of man's reason. In the framework of Endgame there is no room for God; He has fallen foul of man and is cursed with a vengeance: "The bastard! He doesn't exist."³⁹ says Hamm after a mock ritual of the prayer.

The very idea of creation, the one that is coming to a sad end and another that might start all over again, is abhorrent to Hamm :

Clov: (anguished, scratching himself):
I have a flea!
Hamm: A flea! Are there still fleas?
Clov: On me there's one.
(Scratching.)
Unless it's a crablouse.
Hamm: (very perturbed):
But humanity might start from there all
over again! Catch him, for the love of
God!⁴⁰

Even in the isolation of a cell Hamm registers a protest against

the evil forces that have taken over. If evil is an attribute of the creation, whether the creation is divine or has its origins in evolution, the creation itself is unacceptable to Hamm.

Nagg and Nell, the two other figures enclosed in the silence of Endgame, are Hamm's progenitors, images of the disgraced Creator Himself. Their very presence, the sounds they make, arouse in Hamm the ferocity of an animal that has been wilfully thrown into the pit by its masters. There are the "fornicators", the "scoundrels" who engendered Hamm and now, in all their deformity, lie in ashbins waiting for removal, waiting to be emptied out. The stench of their decaying bodies is an added twist in the tortured existence of Hamm. He would have them dumped but is helpless, has been rendered immobile and is a mere witness to the futility of his own fury :

Have you not finished? Will you never finish?
 (With sudden fury.)
 Will this never finish?
 (Nagg disappears into his bin, closes the lid
 behind him. Nell does not move. Frenziedly.)
 My kingdom for a nightman!
 (He whistles. Enter Clov.)
 Clear away this muck! Chuck it in the sea!⁴¹

The existence of Nagg and Nell, vulgar and full of deceptions, is on a lower level. While Hamm and Clov are engaged in a grim struggle even though the end is foreknown, Nagg and Nell negate what is essential to human existence in

an absurd universe: the dignity with which man confronts his circumstances. They have capitulated without struggle and seek to live through an appeal to their past, through an almost complete identification with it. Limited in their awareness of the situation, blinded to the tragic extent of reality, they indulge with all seriousness in what is a mockery of human passions :

Nell: What is it, my pet?
 (Pause.)
 Time for love?
 Nagg: Were you asleep?
 Nell: Oh no!
 Nagg: Kiss me.
 Nell: We can't.
 Nagg: Try.
 (Their heads strain towards each other,
 fail to meet, fall apart again.)⁴²

The present, the present drained of any future, brings out in Nagg and Nell imbecility instead of lucidity, capitulation instead of confrontation. Like worms they cling to life, cringing for paps and hollow expressions of sympathy. Incapable of participation in the present, they recapture in their dialogue the before that has long since been enveloped by what came after. Scared, stupefied, they are there, sheltered in a world of illusions, oblivious to their predicament. With devotion they enact the sordid melodramas of their past, tell funny stories that have been told so often that they are not funny any more. Lacking in awareness they have never realized the anguish of being, the extent of human

suffering, of despair. They are sheltered by the trivialities of a vulgar and mundane existence.

Nagg: Will I tell you the story of the tailor?

Nell: No.

(Pause.)

What for?

Nagg: To cheer you up.

Nell: It's not funny.

Nagg: It always made you laugh.

(Pause.)

The first time I thought you'd die.

Nell: It was on Lake Como.

(Pause.)

One April afternoon.

(Pause.)

Can you believe it?

Nagg: What?

Nell: That we once went out rowing on Lake Como.

(Pause.)

One April afternoon.

Nagg: We had got engaged the day before.

Nell: Engaged!

Nagg: You were in such fits that we capsized. By rights we should have been drowned.

Nell: It was because I felt happy.⁴³

Hamm and Clov dare not mean anything, dare not laugh any more but laughter and meaning are still possible for Nagg and Nell in a most simian fashion. Unaware and unconcerned with the present they seek sustenance from their past like a dog that hangs on to a piece of bone even when it is all hollowed and dried out. Crippled and with an extremely narrowed vision, they are images of the mass that continues to exist without having ever placed itself in a universal human context. Nagg and Nell have neither the ability

to diagnose a situation nor the courage to face up to it. In the universe of Endgame where death is certain, the manner of dying, man's whole attitude to his wretched condition, is of prime importance. Nagg and Nell are there and will disappear one day, any day, without having ever realized the nature of their predicament.

V. CONCLUSION

Grain by grain the heap mounts up. Nagg and Nell are left to die, or are already dead. Clov fills the last detail in the bare ritual of existence in the shelter: he looks beyond the darkness. Something has changed in the landscape of extinction. There is a small boy, a potential procreator, but the prospect of another creation arouses no joy in either Hamm or Clov. They are dismayed, even anguished, as they see the stage being laid out for another grand tragedy, another endgame. Aware, and having come to terms with their predicament, they have moved far beyond the point where man is liable to fall victim to the illusions of hope. They have banished hope, it has no further place in the ritual of their efforts to maintain this encounter with the absurdity, the silence, of the universe. The point has been reached when they will accept their solitude without remorse, without regret. This is the finest move that man can make in a game that the impossibility of the situation reduces to a farce.

As the play approaches its tragic finale, the stage is emptied of all its emotional content. Clov prepares to leave, has left as far as Hamm is concerned. Hamm is to carry on the dialogue alone, is called upon to accept the forsaken nature of his being. Hamm accepts the challenge, brings out the finest in himself, and asserts his dignity. He discards, without emotion, even the slightest means of support: his gaff, his dog; he calls on Clov and his father but calmly accepts their silence.

There, right in the centre of the stage, rests the body of a hero, a villain, but most of all, the representative of an extinct human race.

Moments for nothing, now as always, time was
never and time is over, reckoning closed and
story ended.⁴⁴

CHAPTER SIX

THE MYTH OF TANTALUS AND ACT WITHOUT WORDS

I. THE MYTH OF TANTALUS

There are numerous versions of how Tantalus incurred the wrath of the gods but there is a general agreement on the nature of his punishment. It is this phase of his humiliated predicament that interests me in relation to Beckett's handling of the theatre of the extreme situation where time piles on agony, is a constant instrument of torture, and where man can assert his dignity only through a detached and contemptuous acceptance of the situation.

Tantalus is chained. He is ever within reach of the water but cannot drink it. The very scene of this damnation is the pool itself. The water, through a divine piece of jugglery, rises to his chin but recedes as soon as he bends down to drink it. Tantalus is experiencing the first shock of his humiliation. The situation is beyond his comprehension. He repeats the process of bending down time and again but without ever being able to quench his thirst. In utter degradation he appeals to the gods but every act of failure only provokes from the gods a triumphant burst of laughter. They have possessed Tantalus but have left him his consciousness, for the very nature of the punishment demands that Tantalus be a witness to his own torture.

Suffering provokes in Tantalus his courage. He is beginning to reflect and in such a moment of reflection the awareness of his predicament hits him. Tantalus realizes the futility of appeal to the gods. He sees through the game that is being placed on him, sees that the gods can torture him through temptation alone. Tantalus realizes that in order to live through choice he must defy the gods, must seek to act in a way that would render the gods helpless. Reason reasserts itself and stimulates in him a strong urge for action.

The water rises to his chin, nay even to his lips. Tantalus has been watching the rise in the level coldly, contemptuously and he bends down only because he is condemned to. All alone there is a full awareness on his part that the water will every stay out of his reach. He has realized temptation to be a part of his punishment and through this realization has lost the craving for the water. The bending down becomes a mere mechanical act, a part of his wretched condition. Just as the water begins to recede, his lips part in a mockery of the gods and his contemptuous stare is turned upwards. The gods dare not meet his eyes, they have failed in their object if the object was to punish Tantalus. Tantalus is no more mystified; through his understanding he is able to transcend the situation. The gods lie in the dust, humiliated. Tantalus has learnt to live without appeal. He is at peace with the inevitability of his circumstance.

II. ACT WITHOUT WORDS

This retelling of the myth of Tantalus bears a direct relevance to an existential interpretation of Beckett's Act Without Words. The curtain goes up on a bare stage filled with dazzling light, and on a man who is to depict here his tortured condition. He is condemned to be here, caged, helpless, all exits being barred. Surrounded by anonymity, by silence, he is an image of any man in an extreme situation, a Tantalus struggling to come to terms with his predicament. Without conscious gestures, without words, he makes his enforced entry on the stage - the very image of a tortured animal :

The man is flung backwards on stage from right wing. He falls, gets up immediately, dusts himself, turns aside, reflects.¹

Bewildered he reflects on his situation. But reflection on a situation clothed in mystery never led anyone anywhere except, of course, to God. The victim has not as yet grasped the situation, the nature of the game that is being played on him. He is unaware of the ingenuity of his hidden tormentors. He hopes for mercy, for escape. These are mere illusions that tempt him into torture.

The whistle from the torturer breaks the silence, tempts him to take his chance. He reflects. As yet unaware, he takes a plunge into the darkness but is flung back violently. After two further

attempts at a getaway he sees through the trick and when he hears the whistle again, he does not move. He has rightly despaired of one avenue of escape. The torturer has to devise other means of persecution. Objects are dropped from above, a tree, a pair of scissors and

A tiny carafe, to which is attached a huge label inscribed WATER, descends from flies,² comes to rest some three yards from ground.

In all innocence, like Tantalus, the man attempts to reach the water but in vain. He gives up and reflects. During his attempts he has been allowed to acquire a piece of rope. The tree and the rope are means to suicide but at the crucial moment the solitary "bough folds down against trunk". Failing at that the man decides to slit his throat with the pair of scissors :

He runs his finger along blade of scissors, goes and lays them on small cube, turns aside, opens his collar, frees his neck and fingers it.³

But he is denied the satisfaction of having put an end to the tortured existence.

The small cube is pulled up and disappears⁴ in flies, carrying away rope and scissors.

All avenues of escape are closed. The man has become aware of the illusive nature of his hope. He can continue to cringe,

or he can assert his dignity through a contemptuous acceptance of the situation. Like Tantalus he chooses to defeat the absolute through sheer mockery :

The carafe descends from flies and comes to
rest a few feet from his body.
He does not move.
Whistle from above.
He does not move.
The carafe descends further, dangles and
plays about his face.
He does not move.
The carafe is pulled up and disappears in flies.
The bough returns to horizontal, the palms
open, the shadow returns.
Whistle from above.
He does not move.
The tree is pulled up and disappears in flies.
He looks at his hands.⁵

The curtain is wrung down on a man alone and forsaken but
at peace with his situation.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Tynan : Curtains, p. 181.
2. Sartre : Forgers of Myths, p. 117.
3. Sartre : Existentialism is a Humanism, p. 291.
4. Sartre : Forgers of Myths, p. 118.
5. Ionesco : Playwrights on Playwriting, p. 284.
6. Manser : Sartre, p. 230.
7. Endgame ; p. 13.
8. Camus : Notebooks, 1935 - 1942. p. 116.
9. Sartre : Nausea, pp. 172-3.
10. Waiting for Godot; p. 89.
11. Gabriel Marcel : The Mystery of Being - 1, p. 177
12. Camus :... The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 90.
13. Ibid., pp. 89 - 90.
14. Pirandello : The Rules of the Game, p. 92.
15. Sophocles : Antigone, ll. 8 - 10.
16. Ibid., ll. 97-8.
17. Ibid., ll. 832 - 836.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1. Waiting for Godot, p. 14
2. Ibid., p. 14.
3. Kenner : Beckett, p. 134.
4. Waiting for Godot, p. 61-2.
5. Camus : The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 8.
6. Waiting for Godot, p. 10.
7. Ibid., p. 80.
8. Esslin : The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 12.
9. Robbe-Grillet : For a New Novel, p. 114-5.
10. Waiting for Godot : p. 14.
11. Ibid., p. 10.
12. Ibid., p. 80.
13. Cohn : Beckett, p. 211.
14. Kott : Shakespeare Our Contemporary, p. 111.
15. Kenner : Beckett, p. 149.
16. Waiting for Godot, p. 62.
17. Sartre : The Condemned of Altona, p. 177.
18. Camus : The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 135.
- 18a. Waiting for Godot, p. 63.
19. Ibid., p. 63.

20. Ibid., p. 12.
21. Ibid., p. 12.
22. Esslin : The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 20.
23. Waiting for Godot ; pp. 37-8.
24. Cohn : Samuel Beckett, p. 221.
25. Beckett : Proust, pp. 2 - 3.
26. Waiting for Godot, p. 11.
27. Beckett : Proust, p. 49.
28. Waiting for Godot, p. 10.
29. Ibid., p. 10.
30. Ibid., p. 10.
31. Ibid., p. 17.
32. Esslin : The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 23.
33. Camus : The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 41.
34. Anouilh : Antigone, p. 24.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1. Waiting for Godot, p. 81.
2. Ibid., p. 34.
3. Ibid., pp. 47-8.
4. Bond : Saved; Quoted as Introduction to the play.
5. Bree : Camus, pp. 144-5.
6. Artaud : The Theatre And its Double, p. 87.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Waiting for Godot, p. 29.
2. Ibid., p. 30.
3. Ionesco : Notes and Counter Notes, p. 180.
4. Waiting for Godot, p. 31.
5. Ibid., p. 33.
6. Ibid., pp. 30-1.
7. Ibid., p. 42.
8. Ibid., p. 89.
9. Ibid., p. 89.
10. Camus : The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 10.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Kenner : Beckett, p. 157.
2. Ibid., p. 165.
3. Blau : The Impossible Theatre, p. 24.
4. Endgame, p. 82.
5. Ibid., p. 57.
6. Durrenmatt : Problems of the Theatre, p. 136.
7. Camus : The Myth of Sisyphus, p. 3.
8. Brook : Encore, 1965/vol. 12. No. 1, p. 11.
9. This is the impression one gets from reading Tynan's review of Endgame, included in Curtains, and from Kenner's analysis of Beckett's plays. Kenner's book, Beckett, tends to be highly superficial at times.
10. Endgame, p. 1.
11. Ibid., p. 45.
12. Coe : Beckett, p. 98.
13. Blau : The Impossible Theatre, 241.
14. Sophocles : Oedipus Rex, ll. 792-5.
15. Endgame, p. 70.
16. Sophocles : Oedipus at Colonus, ll. 1472-3.
17. Ibid., pp. 1692-4.
18. Jan Kott : Shakespeare : Our Contemporary, p. 105.
19. Endgame, p. 2-3.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FIVE CONTINUED

20. Ibid., p. 32.
21. Ibid., p. 11.
22. Ibid., p. 18.
23. Ibid., p. 18.
24. Ibid., p. 26.
25. Ibid., pp. 43-4.
26. Ibid., p. 52.
27. Ibid., p. 6.
28. Ibid., pp. 5-6.
29. Ibid., pp. 6-7.
30. Ibid., pp. 32-3.
31. Ibid., p. 58.
32. Ibid., p. 19.
33. Ibid., pp. 62-3.
34. Ibid., p. 67.
35. Ibid., p. 3.
36. Ibid., p. 34.
37. Ibid., p. 68.
38. Sartre : Existentialism is a Humanism, p. 291.
39. Endgame , p. 55.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FIVE CONTINUED

- 40. Ibid., p. 33.
- 41. Ibid., p. 23.
- 42. Ibid., p. 14.
- 43. Ibid., pp. 20-1.
- 44. Ibid., p. 83.

CHAPTER SIX

- 1. Act Without Words, p. 87.
- 2. Ibid., p. 88
- 3. Ibid., p. 90.
- 4. Ibid., p. 90.
- 5. Ibid., pp. 90-1.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Beckett, Samuel. Endgame and Act Without Words. Translated by the author. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

Beckett, Samuel. Happy Days. New York: Grove Press, 1961.

Beckett, Samuel. How it is. New York: Grove Press, 1964.

Beckett, Samuel. Krapp's Last Tape and Other Dramatic Pieces. Translated by the author. New York: Grove Press, 1960.

Beckett, Samuel. Molloy, Malone Dies and The Unnamable, Three Novels. Translated by Patrick Bowles and the author. New York: Grove Press, 1959.

Beckett, Samuel. Murphy. New York: Grove Press, 1957.

Beckett, Samuel. Play and Two short Pieces for Radio. London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1962.

Beckett, Samuel. Proust. New York: Grove Press, 1957.

Beckett, Samuel. Waiting for Godot. Translated by the author. London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1956.

Secondary Sources

- Anouilh, Jean. Beckett. Translated by Lucienne Hill. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1961.
- Anouilh, Jean. Five Plays. 2 vol. New York: Hill and Wang, 1958.
- Artaud, Antonin. The Theater and its Double. Translated by Mary Caroline Richards. New York: Grove Press, 1958.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. Marquis de Sade. With selections from his writings chosen by Paul Dinnage. New York: Grove Press, 1954.
- Blau, Herbert. The Impossible Theater. New York: Collier Books, 1965.
- Bogard, Travis. Modern Drama. New York: O. U. P., 1965.
- Bond, Edward. Saved. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1966.
- Bree, Germaine. Camus. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964.
- Brook, Peter. Endgame as King Lear in Encore. 1965, vol. 12. No. 1, London.
- Camus, Albert. The Myth of Sisyphus. Translated by Justin O'Brien. New York: Vintage Books, 1955.
- Camus, Albert. Notebooks, 1935 - 1942. Translated by Philip Thody. New York: Modern Library, 1965.
- Camus, Albert. The Outsider. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1961.
- Camus, Albert. The Plague. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1960.
- Camus, Albert. The Rebel. Translated by Anthony Bower. New York: Vintage Books, 1956.

- Coe, Richard N. Beckett. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964.
- Cohn, Ruby. Samuel Beckett: The Comic Gamut. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1962.
- Cole, Toby, Ed. Playwrights on Playwriting. New York: Hill and Wang, 1961.
- Desan, Wilfred. The Tragic Finale. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960.
- Durrenmatt, Friedrich. Problems of the Theatre. Included in Playwrights on Playwriting. Ed. Toby Cole. New York: Hill and Wang, 1961.
- Esslin, Martin. Ed. Samuel Beckett. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965.
- Esslin, Martin. The Theatre of the Absurd. New York: Anchor Books, 1961.
- Fallico, Arturo B. Art and Existentialism. Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965.
- Grossvogel, D.I. Four Playwrights. New York: Cornell University Press, 1962.
- Guicharnaud, Jacques. Modern French Theatre. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961.
- Harvey, L.E. Art and Existentialism in Waiting for Godot. P.M.L.A., No. 75, 1960.
- Ionesco, Eugene. Notes and Counter Notes. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964.
- Jasper, Karl. Man in the Modern Age. New York: Anchor Books, 1957.
- Kott, Jan. Shakespeare our Contemporary. London: Methuen, 1964.
- Kenner, Hugh. Samuel Beckett. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961.
- Malraux, Andre. Days of Wrath. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1964.
- Malraux, Andre. Man's Fate. New York: Modern Library, 1934.

- Manser, Richard. Sartre. New York: O. U. P., 1966
- Marcel, Gabriel. The Mystery of Being. 2 vols. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1960.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Birth of Tragedy. New York: Anchor Books, 1956.
- Pirandello, Luigi. The Rules of the Game. Included in To Clothe The Naked. New York: Dutton and Co., 1962.
- Pirandello, Luigi. To Clothe the Naked. Translated by William Murray. New York: Dutton and Co., 1962.
- Proust, Marcel. On Art and Literature. Translated by S. T. Warner. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1964.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. For a New Novel. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Grove Press, 1965.
- Robbe-Grillet, Alain. Last Year at Marienbad. Translated by Richard Howard. London: John Calder, 1962.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Being and Nothingness. Translated by H. E. Barnes. London: Methuen and Co., 1957.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. The Condemned of Altona. Translated by George Leeson, New York: Vintage Books, 1961.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Existentialism. New York: Philosophical Library, 1947.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Intimacy. Translated by L. Alexander. London: Panther Books, 1960.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Existentialism is ^a Humanism. Included in Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre. Editor W. Kaufmann, Meridan Books, 1956.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Forgers of Myths. Included in Playwrights on Playwriting. Editor Toby Cole. New York: Hill and Wang, 1961.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Nausea. Translated by L. Alexander. New York: New Directions, 1964.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. Saint Genet. Translated by B. Frechtman. New York: Mentor Books, 1963.

Sophocles. Oedipus the King, Oedipus at Colonus, Antigone. Edited by David Greene, and Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954.

Tynan, Kenneth. Curtains. New York: Atheneum Press, 1961.

